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RR RUEHDBU RUEHPW RUEHSL  
DE RUEHBUL #1902/01 1971122  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 161122Z JUL 09  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0204  
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 001902

DEPARTMENT FOR SRAP, SCA/FO, SCA/A, EUR/RPM  
STATE PASS TO AID FOR ASIA/SCAA  
USFOR-A FOR POLAD  
USNATO FOR PHARRISON

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#) [IR](#) [FR](#)  
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON OBSERVER PRESENCE FOR AFGHAN ELECTIONS

REF: A. KABUL 1679  
[1](#)B. KABUL 1136

Summary  
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[1](#)1. (SBU) At a July 13 press conference, the European Union officially launched its observer mission to the Afghan elections, which will deploy 86 observers around Afghanistan, including 50 short-term observers, down slightly from earlier figures. Post is negotiating grants with four implementers that would put over 250 long-term and short-term observers into the field. The domestic observer organization FEFA plans to deploy 400 Afghan long-term observers and 7600 Afghan short-term observers which they hope will cover 65 percent of polling stations. To achieve geographic distribution, we will rely in some cases on military support, including PRT support, and we are making these arrangements through ISAF. We expect that frequent press conferences from now through the post-election period by FEFA and the outspoken EU Chief Observer will feature frequently in the Afghan media. End summary.

[1](#)2. (U) The EU launched its observer mission with a press conference on July 13 at Kabul's Intercontinental Hotel. EU Chief Observer Gen. (Ret.) Philippe Morillon said he understood the challenges posed in these elections and hoped that the EU's neutral, impartial assessment would contribute to the strengthening of a legitimate and credible democratic process. The EU long-term and short-term observers will evaluate the campaign season, voting day, results, and post-election activity. The mission's mandate covers election administration, legal framework, media environment and role of civil society, and the participation of women and minorities.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Morillon editorialized that democracy is a prerequisite to harmonic development, and that, "peace is a part of Islam, and this beautiful country deserves it." He said that Afghans deserve a future free of hegemony and terror. He noted that international observers were excluded from Iran's recent elections, while observers helped bolster credibility of Lebanese elections. He also said neighbors need to accept one another, as they are mutually dependent. Comment: Morillon hinted that in the context of looking at irregularities, his team will also examine outside interference in Afghanistan's elections. His intent to hold frequent press conferences and his outspoken and extemporaneous style will likely make him a regular focus of Afghan media. End Comment.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The EU is fielding 36 long-term observers and 50 short-term observers. It now plans to recruit short-term observers from EU and Canadian embassies in Kabul. These numbers - adjusted for security reasons -- represent a decrease from the EU's original plan. As previously reported (ref A) the EU mission will work out of eight regional hubs, but they will determine deployments outside the hubs at later dates, based on security assessments. Morillon said they hope to cover all provinces in the country. The EU mission expects the OSCE will embed their "experts" in the EU's regional hubs.

## U.S. Plans

15. (SBU) The mission has signed the funding award this week with Democracy International (DI) for their observation mission. Preauthorization funding has already been approved for The Asia Foundation (TAF) in support of the ANFREL observer mission, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI). The TAF award should be finalized and signed next week. All observer missions have begun their initial assessments and are in the process of finalizing their deployment plans, in consultation with USAID and the US Embassy. These grants would put a total of over 250 long-term and short-term observers in the field.

16. (SBU) Negotiations continue with several observer missions to ensure the most robust and extensive coverage possible given the current security environment. Based on current planning, there will be coverage by USG funded international observers in 27 of the 32 provinces. This week, Ghazni, Helmand, Farah, and Zabul were added to the deployment plans, contingent upon support from ISAF and the PRTs (including lodging and transportation).

17. (SBU) Post is currently working through ISAF channels to secure PRT support for U.S.-funded observers where necessary (while cognizant of the limited resources available) and we are coordinating with the Europeans to de-conflict such requests. This week the mission stood up the Logistics Coordination Center (LCC) to coordinate observers' requests for logistical support, including airlift and ISAF support. The mission has received approval to bring in four additional aircraft to transport observers and other election-related entities.

18. (SBU) In addition, U.S. Embassy Kabul plans to field a number of observer teams on election day in the greater Kabul area. These teams would combine American and local staff. We are working with

KABUL 00001902 002 OF 002

NDI to set up training for U.S. observers.

## Domestic Observers

19. (U) The Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA), a coalition of Afghan groups that make up the domestic observation contingent, briefed donors on their election-day observation plans on June 14, noting that they had been observing throughout the electoral cycle. To date, they have recruited 68 provincial representatives, of which half are women outreach officers responsible for recruiting and training female observers. They are in the process of recruiting and training 400 long-term observers and 7600 short-term observers through their partner organizations and feel confident that they will be able to meet this target. FEFA plans on holding several more press conferences between now and the final announcement of results: on the campaign period (August 19); on the opening and closing of the polls (August 20); and on the counting process (the last week of August). FEFA plans to have observers in all 34 provinces, with fewer numbers in the most insecure districts. They anticipate being able to observe in 65 percent of all polling centers. Per Ref B, the quality of FEFA's analysis has been an ongoing problem. According to the Executive Director, FEFA has taken several steps to improve their data collection and analysis. FEFA has created two databases, one that contains the contact information for their observers, and another that contains the information from the observers' checklists. This information is then analyzed and interpreted by HQ staff. Although they now have a new full-time UNDP advisor working with them on organizational capacity, FEFA is still looking for a new short-term consultant to help them with data analysis and monitoring and evaluation. They are also expecting two OSCE experts to help formulate recommendations for the next electoral cycle.

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